



Mr. William T. Hawks
Under Secretary for Marketing
And Regulatory Programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Dear Mr. Hawks,

It is time for the USDA to devise some simple, effective rules for the mandatory country of origin labeling program, such as those proposed by the Americans for Country of Origin Labeling coalition.

We need to have more information concerning the food that we eat...and that info should include the origin of the product. It is a fact that food safety and disease outbreaks are occurring at an increasing rate around the world and this action could very likely slow it down here in the United States. It is very necessary that we, the consumers, have this knowledge in order to make an informed decision on what to put into our bodies.

Retailers and packers have already expressed their willingness to place a greater burden on suppliers than is required by the Farm Bill. Some packers are demanding that producers obtain a third-party certification of origin. This is unnecessary and unfair to small producers who already have enough problems on their hands. Any labeling program should place a record-keeping burden only on processors, packers and retailers. This can be achieved by allowing sole authority of conducting audits to the USDA, while instructing processors and retailers to add country of origin information to existing paperwork transactions.

In addition to this, the Commission should maximize the number of foods that will be labeled. Enhancing a covered product by the addition of water, flavoring, salt or other seasonings should not exclude the product from labeling requirements nor should cooking, curing or roasting

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Margaret Brown